



**The Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) Bulletin has been created to provide ongoing direction to health-care providers regarding the recommended guidelines, processes and provincial supply of PPE.**

**If you have any questions about PPE please call the OHS Hotline at 1-833-233-4403 or email**

**[OHS\\_Healthcareworkers\\_COVID19@saskhealthauthority.ca](mailto:OHS_Healthcareworkers_COVID19@saskhealthauthority.ca)**

## Continuous Masking Principle and Guidelines

The Saskatchewan Health Authority (SHA) has added additional levels of precaution to protect each other and those we care for. Since April 14, all staff and physicians who work in a clinical care area/facility where there will be direct or indirect contact with patients/residents/clients are required to wear a mask at all times. Refer to [Continuous Masking Principles and Guidelines](#) and [Talking Points and FAQs](#) for more details.

Continuous and Extended PPE Use Guidelines for acute care, continuing care, outpatient settings/primary care, COVID-19 units/cohorted spaces and COVID-19 testing and assessment centres as well as masking guidelines for family members/support people and patients/residents/clients are available at [saskatchewan.ca/covid19-providers](https://saskatchewan.ca/covid19-providers).

## Pandemic Supply Use

During the COVID-19 response, a key priority for the Saskatchewan health system is sustained access to needed, appropriate PPE to ensure the health and safety of staff, physicians, and patients/residents.

Given the global context of the pandemic, demand for supplies is significant. The SHA and the province continue to work on many fronts to secure supply and monitor the situation closely while examining various strategies to employ in the event that supplies become limited.

We are supplementing existing supplies with N95 respirators available from provincial pandemic supplies. Before putting these respirators into use, the SHA and the Saskatchewan Association for Safe Workplaces in Health (SASWH) had been using them in fit testing throughout the SHA with no reported issues. As well, Canadian guidance and international research completed on testing of beyond normal shelf life respirators further supports the use of these supplies.

We appreciate your efforts in ensuring the appropriate use of PPE resources.

Regardless of the type of N95 respirator you are using, users should take the following precautionary measures prior to using the respirator in the workplace, a [Rapid Update](#) is also available to share with your team:

- Visually inspect the N95 to determine if its integrity has been compromised.
- Check that components such as the straps, nose bridge, and nose foam material did not degrade, which can affect the quality of the fit, and seal and therefore the effectiveness of the respirator.
- Users should perform a user seal check immediately after they don each respirator and should not use a respirator on which they cannot perform a successful user seal check.
- If the integrity of any part of the respirator is compromised, or if a successful user seal check cannot be performed, discard the respirator and try another respirator.





### Current Provincial Droplet/Contact Plus PPE Guidelines:

For suspect/confirmed COVID-19 patients/residents/clients, the following precautions and PPE must be used:

Suspect/Confirmed COVID-19:	Suspect/Confirmed COVID-19 patient that requires <a href="#">Aerosol-Generating Medical Procedure (AGMP)</a> :
<b>Precautions:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Droplet/Contact Plus</li> </ul> <b>Personal Protective Equipment:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Procedure/Surgical mask</li> <li>• Facial/Eye Protection</li> <li>• Gown (Level 1 or 2)</li> <li>• Gloves</li> </ul>	<b>Precautions:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Droplet/Contact Plus</li> </ul> <b>Personal Protective Equipment:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• N95 Respirator</li> <li>• Facial/Eye Protection</li> <li>• Gown (Level 2)</li> <li>• Gloves</li> </ul>
<b>Prioritization of patient placement:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• If a negative pressure room is not available, <b>AGMPs</b> should be performed in a private room with hard walls and the door closed.</li> </ul>	

\* Facemask with built in visors are NOT recommended eye protection. Please ensure that you are using a [face shield as eye protection](#) (indirectly or non-vented goggles are acceptable, if available).

### PPE Reprocessing

On April 9, the Saskatchewan Health Authority and the Vaccine and Infectious Disease Organization-International Vaccine Centre (VIDO-InterVac) at University of Saskatchewan [announced their partnership](#) on an initiative to safely decontaminate and reuse N95 respirators that are normally thrown away after each use.

As of July 1, VIDO-InterVac has successfully completed the sterilization of over 8000 respirators to add to our emergency supply.

We need your continued help to ensure this process remains effective:

- Collection bins will be set up for you to place used respirators.
- Please ensure the respirators you are placing in the collection bins are not damaged. Please check the following:
  - elastics are still in good condition;
  - that they do not have visible gross contaminants (including makeup);
  - that they have not been used in the preparation of cytotoxic drugs.
- Please do not place any other objects into these bins as it will delay the process and increase the sorting time.

The bins are collected on a regular basis and transported to VIDO-InterVac for reprocessing. Your collective efforts to help ensure we are collecting as many respirators as possible is greatly appreciated.



### Supply Chain Management of PPE Supplies

Supply Chain has been working diligently to ensure that SHA staff and physicians have PPE supplies in the right place at the right time. On a daily basis, Supply Chain counts and monitors all PPE inventory in local Stores and tracks demand to identify critical risks. During Supply Chain daily huddles, the provincial team discusses possible PPE surges, potential inventory shortages, and transfer of product among sites.

As well, the Provincial Logistics structure has a coordinated Supply Chain Strategy that includes Allocation and Sourcing teams. They have specific roles to ensure that there is prioritization of sourcing out alternate product and equitable allocation of PPE supplies throughout our provincial sites and health system partners, to keep everyone safe. These teams are also connected to provincial PPE committees to enable timely responses to any inventory concerns and to proactively address any issues before they reach front-line staff.

Staff may notice a variation in standard product as a result of the global shortage of PPE. Please know that alternate suppliers and products are pre-qualified by a thorough and diligent process, including feedback from infection prevention and control (IPC), occupational health and safety (OHS), and appropriate clinical representation to ensure standards are met. Safety is paramount in all procurement decisions.

The provincial supply is continuously in development to ensure PPE needs are being met and distribution strategies align with provincial needs. Inventory is being managed carefully at a local level, to ensure availability and accessibility when and where required. Changes to PPE supply flow and processes may be occurring at certain sites, in order to better control inventory.

Concerns about PPE stock availability should be addressed at a local level, with Supply Chain/Inventory Managers as processes are in place to escalate to provincial Supply Chain leadership as required.

### Questions and Answers:

- 1. On our medical unit I notice we have two boxes of procedure masks: one says *level 1* and one is labeled *level 2*. What should I be using for a suspected/confirmed COVID-19 patient?**

An expert panel has reviewed existing research and evidence and has advised that for routine care of suspected/confirmed COVID patients (or influenza like illness (ILI) patients of all kinds) a level 1 procedure mask provides appropriate protection.

Level 2 and 3 masks are can also be used but should be preserved for situations (e.g. OR, trauma rooms, etc.) where fluid contamination at pressures above 80mmHg are anticipated. More information can be found in the [PPE Rapid Update – The Right Mask for the Right Task](#).

- 2. Now that the continuous masking strategy has been put in place, do we still need to be masking patients/residents?**

Patients are screened upon admission and once in hospital are regularly assessed for symptoms and fever. **Outpatients will be provided with a mask to wear (if they can tolerate)**. We are asking inpatients to stay in their rooms as much as possible. Residents of our LTC facilities are also routinely monitored and would be isolated in their room if symptoms developed. There is no recommendation to mask asymptomatic inpatients or residents at this time.





### 3. Can we reuse face shields?

In an effort to preserve our current supply of protective eyewear and ensure staff have access to the necessary PPE to perform safe patient care, the reuse of face shields between patients will be permitted as long as staff are able to comply with the outlined principles [found in the PPE Rapid Update – Disinfecting Face Shields](#). **Face shields should be disposed of at the end of the shift.**

**Please note:** These measures are temporary during periods of short supply.